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Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 VIENTI 04947 121517Z

45
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W
---------- 065026
R 121135Z JUL 73
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4923
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY ATAIPEI
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL UDORN

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 4947

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, BM, TH, TS, LA
SUBJ: IBMND UNITS IN LAOS

1. ON JULY 12 I DISCUSSED WITH PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA IBMND PRESENCE IN LAOS. SOUVANNA, WHO WAS WELL VERSED ON ROLE AND LOCATION OF IBMND UNITS, SAID THAT HE HAD NO OBJECTIONS TO IBMND MAINTAINING A VERY LOW KEYED PRESENCE IN VIENTIANE (HE MENTIONED TWO OR THREE PEOPLE) BUT HOPED THAT UNITS IN THE PROVINCES COULD BE WITHDRAWN. HE STRESSED THAT A VERY LOW IBMND PROFILE IN LAOS IS IN LINE WITH HIS POLICY OF PROJECTING A NEUTRAL IMAGE. FOR A SIMILAR REASON, SOUVANNA SAID, HE HAD REQUESTED AND OBTAINED LAST MONTH DEPARTURE OF KHMER FORCES FROM SOUTHERN LAOS.

2. SOUVANNA SAID THERE WAS NO URGENCY TO THE REMOVAL OF IBMND PRESENCE FROM MUONG HI OR NAM KUENG BUT OPINED THAT ONCE COALITION GOVERNMENT FORMED IN LAOS, PRESENCE OF THESE IBMND UNITS WOULD BE LIABILITY AND IT WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR IBMND TO MAINTAIN SMALL GROUP IN VIENTIANE. HE THEREFORE THOUGHT IBMND SHOULD RESTRUCTURE IN LAOS
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SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

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3. I SAID THAT WE ARE ALSO BROACHING SUBJECT OF IBMND WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTHEAST ASIS WITH APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN RANGOON, BANGKOK AND TAIPEI AND THAT I WOULD KEEP PRIME MINISTER INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS.

DEAN

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